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Presidential couple try hand at

bricklaying

Clintons sweep into Flats

CAPE TOWN. – United States First Lady Hillary Clinton yesterday became a member of a self-help housing scheme, run largely by black women on the windswept Cape Flats, while her husband Bill showed he still remembered the bricklaying skills he learned on a summer job decades ago.

President Clinton said the project could prove a model for the rest of Africa and the world, and promised an extra \$3 million (R15 million) in aid for it and similar projects in South Africa.

The Victoria Mxenge project at Philippi was the surprise first public appearance by Pres Clinton after his arrival at Cape Town International Airport.

Mrs Clinton alone had been scheduled to put in an appearance at the project – which she first visited last year – but journalists waiting there were told at ten minutes' notice that Pres Clinton himself would be with her.

The presidential couple swept into the project in a convoy of at least 17 vehicles, shadowed by a police helicopter, shortly before 11.30 am.

A beaming Pres Clinton climbed out of his black

limousine and shook hands with cheering women behind wire barriers.

The couple were shown into the home of project founder member Veliswa Mbeki, where the Clintons listened as SA Homeless People's Federation national chairwoman Patricia Matolengwe explained how the house was built.

They also tried their hand at laying mortar and cement blocks on a house which was being built, under the watchful eye of the women builders.

Asked for a professional judgment on the president's skills, one of them, Rose Maso, said: "He was very good, and Mrs

Clinton also... it seems to me maybe she did practice this before."

Pres Clinton revealed later that about 30 years ago he had spent almost a whole summer building houses and realised then what hard work it was.

"That's why I went into politics, so I wouldn't have to work so hard anymore," he joked.

He also said he believed the project – which is funded partly by communal savings – should be a model for poor people in the rest of Africa and the world.

"If you can do it, then in villages all over the world people can do the same thing," he said. – Sapa.

TREFWOORDE

- 1 VSA
- 2 Clinton H
- 3 B. Mbeki
- 4 Kaapse Vlakte
- 4 Behrens
- Skuman
- 5 Swales
- 7 Vroon
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